

CLAIMS

1. A presence system comprising a database storing a plurality of entries each relating to a recipient party, wherein each entry is stored according to a unique identifier assigned to the corresponding recipient party and each entry includes at least one rule specifying a manner of communications between the corresponding recipient party and an initiating party, wherein the system manages communications between an initiating party and a recipient party according to the or each appropriate rule.
2. A presence system according to claim 1 wherein the presence system comprises a server hosting the database.
3. A presence system according to claim 2 wherein interaction between an initiating party and the database is in the manner of interaction with an Internet web site.
4. A presence system according to claim 3 wherein the server generates data processable by an Internet enabled device.
5. A presence system according to claim 2 wherein associated with the server is a data conversion module for converting data from an initiating party device into a form which the server may process, and for converting data from the server into a form which the initiating party device may process.
6. A presence system according to claim 4 wherein, in response to a request from an initiating party to communicate, the server generates data which, when processed at an initiating party device, results in the opening of a communications application.

7. A presence system according to claim 4 wherein, in response to a request from an initiating party to communicate, the server generates data which, when processed at an initiating party device, results in at least one instruction or notification.
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8. A presence system according to claim 4 wherein the data is dictated by the or each rule in the relevant recipient party entry for the initiating party requesting to communicate.
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9. A presence system according to claim 1 wherein a security mechanism is provided for secure access by a recipient party to their entry.
10. A presence system according to claim 1 wherein, in response to a query from an initiating party, the database returns the unique identifier.
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11. A presence system according to claim 1 wherein, in response to a query from an initiating party, the database returns details about a recipient party.
12. A presence system according to claim 11 the database returns details in accordance with the or each rule for the querying initiating party.
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13. A presence system according to claim 1 wherein each entry includes details of each communication device at the disposal of the corresponding recipient party, and the or each rule specifies to which device communications from an initiating party should be directed.
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14. A presence system according to claim 1 wherein each entry includes details of known initiating parties, and there is at least one rule specified for each known initiating party as well as a default rule for every other initiating party.
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15. A presence system according to claim 14 wherein the system periodically notifies each known initiating party of their status in relation to the recipient party.
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16. A method of communicating between an initiating party and a recipient party comprising assigning to the recipient party a unique identifier and making at least one rule specifying the manner of communications between an initiating party and the recipient party, wherein the unique identifier is used to direct a request for communications from an initiating party to a system which manages communications between the initiating party and the recipient party in accordance with the or each rule.
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17. A method according to claim 16 wherein the initiating party queries the system for the unique identifier.
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18. A method according to claim 17 wherein the initiating party queries the system using known details of the recipient party.
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19. A method according to claim 16 wherein the initiating party queries the system for other details relating to a recipient party.
20. A method according to claim 16 wherein communications are managed by generating data.
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21. A method according to claim 16 wherein processing the data at an initiating party device results in the opening of a communications application.
22. A method according to claim 16 wherein processing data at an initiating party device results in a notification or instruction at the initiating party device.
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23. A method according to claim 16 wherein the system comprises a database and the unique identifier is used to locate an entry relating to a recipient party contained in the database.
- 5 24. A method according to claim 23 wherein the recipient party enters contact details into the entry.
25. A method according to claim 23 wherein the recipient party enters details of the communications devices into the entry.
- 10 26. A method according to claim 23 wherein the recipient party enters details of known initiating parties into the entry.
27. A method according to claim 23 wherein the recipient party enters into the entry at least one rule for each known initiating party and a default rule for any other initiating parties.
- 15 28. A method according to claim 16 wherein data to and from an initiating party and a recipient party is converted from one form to another.
- 20 29. A method according to claim 16 wherein data is converted to and from a form which an initiating party and the system respectively can process.
- 30 31. A directory comprising a plurality of entries each relating to a recipient party, wherein each entry is stored according to a unique identifier assigned to the corresponding recipient party and each entry includes at least one rule specifying a manner of communications between the corresponding recipient party and an initiating party.

